

THE  
YORKSHIRE DIALECT SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1897



HISTORY and AIMS

BY

W. J. Halliday, M.A.

*(Editorial Secretary)*

KENDAL:

TITUS WILSON AND SON, LTD.

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## HISTORY AND AIMS

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### HOW IT BEGAN.

The Yorkshire Dialect Society has been in existence since 1897. As early as 1894 a Committee had been formed to assist Professor Joseph Wright, the distinguished Yorkshire philologist, in the compilation of his monumental "English Dialect Dictionary." More than 90 people collected over 35,000 words and phrases, and this body of workers was the germ of the present Society.

When the Committee was dissolved, its immediate task having been accomplished, it was decided to carry on these investigations into dialect, and so the Dialect Society was formed. In the words of the Report read at the first annual meeting at York on September 21st, 1897, "it was felt that the field of research was by no means exhausted, and in view of the interest in dialect and kindred subjects which had been aroused by the Committee's work, it was resolved that if a sufficient number of persons could be found willing to join, to form a Dialect Society for the county."

The idea was taken up with enthusiasm. The first President was the Marquis of Ripon, and among the Vice-Presidents were Professor Skeat, Professor Wright, the Archbishop of York, and the Dean of Durham.

The first issue of the Dialect Society's Transactions (July, 1898) gives a list of 288 members, and it is worthy of note that that number has been steadily maintained throughout the Society's long life. To the early scholars and enthusiasts a high tribute must be paid. When one thinks of the contributions to dialect and language scholarship which were made by such



men as Charles Federer, the Rev. M. C. F. Morris, Professor Skeat, Professor Wright, J. Horsfall Turner and others, one feels that the success of a Society in which these men played a leading part was assured from the beginning.

In his inaugural address, the first President, the Marquis of Ripon, K.G., expressed a hope that the new Society would be a Yorkshire Society, not confining its activities to one Riding, but impartially surveying the whole county in its work. This it has always tried to achieve, and the long list of contributors from all parts of the shire, and the wide range of dialect topics discussed at its meetings and in the pages of its Transactions testify to its comprehensive aims.

#### WHAT IT HAS DONE.

Since 1897 the Society has altered very little in its constitution and aims. True, it has not strictly carried out the enormous programme laid down by Mr. Turner at the meeting of the Council in 1897. This scheme was bewildering in its complexity and scope. One suggestion, for example, ran: "Copy out all the place-names in your Parish Register, and especially consult the Tithe Commutation and other maps in the custody of the Vicar and the Parish Clerk, who will gratuitously give access for so laudable a purpose." Well, if we have failed in the letter to carry out some of these instructions, we have worked in the spirit of them, and the measure of our success may be gauged by the encouragement and support we have received from Yorkshiremen all over the world.

In the survey of English Place-names, for example, two of our members are playing a distinguished part. Professor Dickins is a member of the Council of the English Place-Name Society, and most of the volumes that have been issued bear witness to his fine scholarship and his expert knowledge of this branch of linguistic science. Dr. A. H. Smith has already published two volumes in the national series, "The Place-names of the North Riding," and "The Place-names of the East Riding," and has now completed, ready for publication, "The Place-names of the West Riding." This magnificent trilogy is a monumental work, and the Society is proud to count Dr. Smith as one of its members.



Among the prominent scholars who have lectured to the Society in Leeds, Sheffield, York, Hull, Northallerton and other towns, one may name Professors Skeat and Wyld, Dr. Bradley, Sir William Craigie, Professors Moorman, Mawer and Vaughan. These lectures are published in the Transactions of the Society which are issued annually, free to members.

It is impossible in a short account like this to give more than a glimpse of the many subjects which have been discussed. The titles of a few of the lectures will indicate the catholicity of choice and the wide range of practical interests which the topics have covered. "The Wakefield Miracle Plays," "Dialect in Literature," "The Scandinavian Element in Yorkshire Place-Names," "Some Yorkshire Shibboleths," "The Dialect of Upper Calderdale," "Bairnla's Best, wi' a bit abaght t'others," "A Chat about Holderness and the East Riding," "Dialect and the Doctor," "The Historical and Educational Value of Yorkshire Dialect," "A Yorkshire Chronicler," "On Slang, Cant and Jargon."

But researches in the grammar, vocabulary and phonology of the dialect have by no means occupied all our attention. It has always been the Society's aim to encourage original work in the dialect. Every year the Transactions publish new dialect work in prose and verse, and the successors of John Hartley, Ben Preston, Mrs. Tweddell, Richard Blakeborough and the other giants of an earlier day are accorded a hearty welcome in the pages of our journal. There you will find a group of writers who are doing so much to maintain the Yorkshire tradition: Major Fairfax-Blakeborough, Dorothy Una Ratcliffe, Sir Ben Turner, May Yorke, Stanley Umpleby, F. Austin Hyde, F. W. Dowson and many others whose dialect writing have brought joy to scores of Yorkshire folk.

#### WHAT IT WANTS TO DO.

Has the Yorkshire Dialect Society completed its task? Has it, after 50 years of strenuous work, any further excuse for existence? There is only one answer to these questions. So long as Yorkshire folk continue to take pride in their dialect, in their old associations and those special qualities of heart and mind which are for ever Yorkshire, so long will the Society be necessary as an essential link in the long tradition.



The revival of interest in dialect has been one of the features of the post-war years. It has been seen in Broadcasting, in the Press, in the many dialect competitions which have been held up and down the county, and in the staging, both in the regular theatre and by amateurs, of scores of Yorkshire Dialect plays. In this revival the Yorkshire Dialect Society has played no small part. Many of the most successful dialect plays are the work of some of its members, and the Society itself, in addition to providing judges for outside contests, has organised two County competitions with great success.

Perhaps, however, its crowning glory has been the embarking on a comprehensive scheme for the permanent recording of our dialects. These gramophone records will be a legacy of priceless value to the generations ahead. The work is now well in hand. The scheme provides for the making of 25 records, and when it is completed, we shall be able to boast an achievement that is without parallel in any other county.

Six records have already been made, and we have now in permanent form specimens of the dialects of Baildon, Driffild, Cowling, Cleveland, Sheffield and Goathland. The rest of the ground will be covered as soon as funds allow. These records have been made by well known exponents of their respective dialects; Mr. Moses Mellor recorded the Baildon dialect, Mr. Hyde the Driffild dialect, Viscount Snowden the dialect of Cowling, and Mr. Stanley Umpleby that of Cleveland.

The work is costly, and we appeal to all Yorkshiremen at home and abroad to come to our assistance with offers of help. We urgently need the sum of £350 to enable us to carry the scheme through. Will you help? Will you do your bit towards the fulfilment of a task which will be a lasting credit and joy to the county which has for you so many pleasant memories and associations?

There is, too, other work of an equally pressing nature. Before it is too late it is essential that we should have glossaries of the dialect terms used in the staple industries of the county. A good beginning has been made, and we have already published glossaries of the Greenhow lead-mining industry by Mr. H. Bruff, of the Sheffield Cutler's dialect by Mr. B. R. Dyson, and of the Staithes Fisherfolk dialect by Mr. Stanley Umpleby. Similar work has been done for Agriculture in the



East Riding by Mr. R. M. Wilson, of Leeds University, but there still remain for investigation the Textile industry in its various branches, Engineering and Mining, and, in fact, any trade that has its specifically Yorkshire vocabulary.

The help which we have received from the two Universities of Leeds and Sheffield cannot be over-estimated. We have had the benefit of their guidance in the learned work of research, and the inspiration of their support in all our activities. The late Professor Moorman's work on behalf of the Society at Leeds is still a happy memory, and the close connection with the University there was maintained through the invaluable assistance of Professor Dickins until his departure for Cambridge. It is now being carried on with the same energy and helpfulness by Professor Orton. At Sheffield one recalls with gratitude the enthusiastic work for the Society done by the late Professor Moore Smith, and the ever-ready counsel and labour that Dr. J. D. Jones has given, and continues to give with unremitting zeal. Now that Cambridge has joined the alliance, we can look forward to a period of enhanced success. The prospects for the future are bright.

The field for research and study in the dialect is limitless. Everybody can help by rescuing from oblivion dialect words and phrases, by collecting odd scraps of old customs, habits, folk-lore and history. These singly may seem to have little significance, but in the hands of the expert they may prove of immense value in the elucidation of language problems, and of those problems of history on the solution of which more of our immediate and practical happiness may depend than we are aware of. These are not just questions of academic scholarship. They are of vital interest to all of us who enjoy the blessings of a great Yorkshire tradition.



# The Yorkshire Dialect Society

(Founded 1897).

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Annual Subscription 5/-.

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## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

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TO MR. A. STANLEY UMPLEBY, J.P.,  
Derry Lodge,  
148, Coniscliffe Road,  
Darlington.

Dear Sir,

I wish to become a member of the Yorkshire Dialect Society.

I enclose \*P.O. for 5/-.

\*Cheque for £5. 5s.

Signed .....

Address .....

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\* Cross out the words which do not apply.



# The Yorkshire District Society

1884

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